

Women's City Club May Come Into Its Own

Mary Garrett Hay, Suffrage Boss, Running for President, and Her Friends Hope She Will Bring Organization Up to Standard of Similar Ones Elsewhere

By ELEANOR BOOTH SIMMONS.

A GREAT big civic organization, that is what it ought to be." The Women's City Club was the "it" in question, and it was Mary Garrett Hay who was talking. Big Boss Hay of the New York City Woman Suffrage Party. She was nominated last week for president of the club, and is extremely likely to be elected. So what she says goes.

What Boss Hay says has a way of going right on under the line ahead of everything in sight. For instance, she said that New York city would vote strong for the suffrage amendment November 6, and it certainly did. New York city, whipped and coaxed into shape by Miss Hay's women leaders, gave the ballot for evermore to the women of this State.

With Miss Hay at the helm, there is reason for confidence that the Women's City Club, which during the two years of its existence has been shilly-shallying on many questions, may attain the objects for which it was organized. It's hard to say just why the club has failed so lamentably in the programme marked out for it, but failed it undoubtedly has. Of course, kindly souls, when these animadversions are made, reply, "Oh, but look at our birth control committee. Look at our committee on feeble minded girls." Whereat the Bolsheviks give them the "ha ha" and state quite truly that the Women's City Club was organized for something more than committees on birth control and feeble minded girls, commendable though these may be.

Two Years of Ineffective Work.

Well, anyhow, after two years and some months of indecision, of meetings that generally oozed out into entirely ineffective endings, of inability to take a decided stand on anything—witness that meeting when Mrs. Harriot Stanton Blatch tried to get the club to put through a preparedness resolution and undertake some definite work for Uncle Sam, just gone to war, and couldn't do it, actually couldn't do it—well, after all this, it begins to look as if the progressive women were going to have an organ through which to do real work, and the Women's City Club was going to be it. This body, which never could take one step forward without taking one backward, with a side-step thrown in, has taken two definite steps in advance. It has nominated a woman of dauntless will and great ability and civic ambition for its head, and has decided to move out of its luxurious, expensive, inefficient hotel quarters into a house in the centre of the business district.

The house, which is almost nailed—not quite, for the negotiations are not completed, but there is little doubt that the club and the real estate men can come together—the house is really ideal. It is at 22 Park avenue, on the northwest corner of Thirty-fifth street, a step from the subway, which pleases everybody who hasn't an automobile. It has twenty-one rooms, with a combined floor space of 12,870 square feet, and there's an annex at the rear that would give twenty bedrooms.

Plenty of Chance for Gossip.

And there are fireplaces in almost every room, around which the members could gather and discuss things, and there is a kitchen where a real cook could prepare real food, which you could have without waiting for it to come up from a kitchen twenty floors below on a leisurely dumb-waiter, as in the club's present quarters at the Hotel Vanderbilt.

The food, too, would be served by waitresses in white aprons, instead of, as at present, by waiters who speak only Greek. It is a distinct disadvantage for a group of women lunchers to have to pause in their discussion of the new city budget or "Why Doesn't Mayor Hylan Appoint More Women to Office?" while they try to remember what club sandwich and Ceylon tea are in Greek. Maybe that is why the club hasn't done more real work. Ordering meals in Greek is very exhausting when you haven't been brought up to it.

The building can be leased furnished—which is a great consideration, the club possessing little furniture—for \$10,000, and the annex for \$7,000. This includes taxes. And the lease would be for five years, with option to buy, the purchasing price being \$160,000 for the house at 22 Park avenue and \$110,000 for the annex.

There was a horrible moment in the life

of the club, when it looked as though the stylish women who have little work to do and don't mind going a little further in the limousine were going to land us in a house way up town on the West Side, where women who have to hustle for a living and own no chauffeur but the subway guard would probably go about once a month.

I remember a meeting where the wealthy element waxed quite enthusiastic over how fine a certain house on West Fifty-sixth street would be with a few decorations and improvements—\$100,000 was the sum they talked about spending—and we were almost lost when the Bolsheviks thrust forward Helen Todd as spokeswoman, and Miss Todd made a few pointed remarks about the wickedness of spending \$100,000 for gilding and plush and chandeliers and things when Uncle Sam needed every cent and every ounce of strength to beat the Germans. Even then the Upper Crust nearly carried their point. There was a vote, and with 154 women there it was a tie, seventy-seven voting for and seventy-seven against. That is what the Women's City Club was

Mrs. Whitehouse and the rest of them had to labor on with the New York State Woman Suffrage party to educate New York men some more and prepare for another referendum on suffrage. Mrs. Miller stayed on and was the club president for a while, but somehow it languished. There were meetings and things, and you felt quite proud, don't you know, when your cousin from Jersey or your school friend from Squedunk came to town for a day's shopping and called you up to take her to your club for lunch.

But was this the thing for women to be content with after being so scornful of the selfish men's clubs, where they do nothing but sit around and gossip and imbibe and smoke, careless of the great issues troubling all about? It was not. Everybody felt vaguely dissatisfied and kept calling meetings with the hope of really coming out for something.

At the meeting Mrs. Blatch or Mrs. Henry Bruere or Mrs. Robert Bruere or some woman with courage would get up and start a really constructive line of talk and suggest something really worth doing, but somebody else would go and hitch a lot

power in municipal affairs the one in Chicago and the one in Boston are living, thriving examples. Take the Chicago Women's Club. To be sure it is forty-two years old, but every one of those forty-two years it has been doing things. It has been a part of the civic life out there in the Windy City. Through its educational department it has brought about needed changes in the public schools. Through its reform department it secured the establishment of schools in the jails, and to this department was due the passage of the juvenile court act. The Chicago Women's Club raised \$18,000 a year to support the juvenile court. It pushed through the Legislature a child labor law and a compulsory education law and it developed a place to care for delinquent girls. It established the principle of domestic courts and got the same out of politics.

Existed in Plain Home.

And through all this splendid activity the Chicago Women's Club existed in very plain and simple surroundings, for the most part renting quarters in some loft building. It is now in the Fine Arts Building, where it has a floor. It has always served excellent home cooked lunches, which used to be only 25 cents, but which the rise in the cost of living sent up to 30, then to 35, then to 50 and finally to 60 cents.

In Washington recently I asked Mrs. George Bass of Chicago, who has always been prominent in the work of the reform department but whom President Wilson has now taken to work with the Democratic National Committee to get the women voters into line—I asked her what was the reason the New York City Women's Club wobbled so, while the Chicago Women's Club went so straight and sure. She replied promptly that Western women were more clubable and co-operated better, worked together better than Eastern women.

New York Women Failed.

"Take the biennial meetings of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," she said. "Chicago had it in 1914, New York two years after. It is no secret that the New York women fell down in preparing for that convention. No one was satisfied with the way the thing was managed. In Chicago the huge hospitality committee worked with entire cooperation and gave satisfaction. And it is a fact that in 1916 there were more delegates to the New York biennial from Chicago than there were from New York."

"Western women work together better and their men look upon them as their co-workers in the best sense. Women have built the West up side by side with the men, and so it is easy for a woman's club out there to do actual things. Men expect it of them; they let them in on everything as a matter of course."

Has 1,000 Members Now.

Well, it is for Big Boss Hay and the Women's City Club as it will be under her to disprove Mrs. Bass's estimate of Eastern women and of Eastern clubs. There was no lack of cooperation in the New York City Woman Suffrage Party and the way it won the vote, there was no lack of cooperation in the New York State Woman Suffrage Party. And there's timber in the 1,000 members of the New York Women's City Club to do as nobly for the right use of the vote as the Suffrage parties did for the gaining it.

As for being advanced in instinct and desire, no one could doubt that the club was well up front. One whiff of the atmosphere in those gilded and upholstered rooms on the eighteenth floor of the Vanderbilt was enough to convince. Socialism could not be smokier.

Tallest Flagstaff Cut.

ENGLAND claims to have the largest flagstaff in the world, but they had to come to the North American continent to get it. It was a present from the British Columbia Government to the mother country and was cut from a forest near Vancouver. The staff is 215 feet long and weighs 18 tons. It has been placed at Kew Gardens and will not be erected until after the war is ended, when Londoners intend to make the flag raising one of the features of the celebration of the victory over the Kaiser.



Mrs. George Bass, who started a woman's club in Chicago.

always doing, tying and not taking a step, but anyhow the tie knocked out the gilded Fifty-sixth street proposition, and now the Bolsheviks is going to have its way and move the club into a house that is practicable for the working sisters.

As I said before, it's hard to say just how the Women's City Club, organized to give the voting women a tool to work with in city affairs, degenerated into what some one, I think it was Mrs. Blatch, called "a place for wandering females who want to know each other." Probably one reason was that its originators and sponsors deserted it as it drew its first breath.

Mrs. Norman de R. Whitehouse and Mrs. Henry Wise Miller and Mrs. Ogden Mills Reid and that group of women then engaged in fighting hard in the New York State Woman Suffrage party for the passage of the 1915 referendum got together and planned it and rented the Alfred Vanderbilt suite in the Vanderbilt Hotel, the idea being that when the referendum went through it would be very nice for the women to be effectively clubbed and all ready to do their work all the same as the men's City Club.

And then the referendum failed, and

of empty ears onto the train of conversation, and puff off with it to a siding that led nowhere in particular. So before you knew it the evening would be over and nothing decided. Remember that meeting recently where they were going to do something to get more women appointed to city offices? Immediately the meeting was called there was a panic lest Mayor Hylan or somebody would be offended; less than a quorum of members came, and nothing was accomplished except that somebody said something about Gov. Whitman that made Mrs. William Einstein mad so that she resigned then and there.

Funny? Yes, it was funny, but now women have got the vote they want a club that produces something more than meetings to make the reporters laugh, expensive lunches in plush surroundings and birth control committees. And with Mary Garrett Hay bossing the meetings with her relentless gavel and her commanding voice women will have that club, or Belle da Costa Greene and Marie Jenney Howe and the other members who started the Hay boom will miss their guess.

That a woman's city club can be a real